

Example

Imagine that, in order to teach more effectively, you've decided to try a new teaching approach which involves also your colleagues and implies a lot of different dynamics compared to before. The techniques and processes you've developed are radically different from the ones that your people are used to. As you tell your colleagues about the new teaching approach, you can't help but be excited. You believe that these changes will make a real difference to your students, and you want your colleagues to succeed, too. Your team immediately picks up on your excitement and sincerity, and they get excited too. They know it's up to them to use the new system to make things happen, and they're willing to put in the extra work needed to learn this new teaching approach.

When to use it

- This style should be used when there is the need of a new fresh direction. However, it's less likely to be effective when you're working with a team more experienced than you are – here, democratic leadership is more likely to be effective.

Example

Jim, a new hire on your team, is having trouble fitting in to his new role. He's only been with the organization a month, but you can tell he's dissatisfied. Your organization requires full time presence at the office, and Jim misses the freedom of telecommuting, as he did at his old job. You also get the feeling that he'd like a position with more responsibility. You meet with Jim, and you help him see that being in the office five days a week does have distinct advantages over telecommuting. For instance, showing up every day allows him to bond with the team and network with colleagues who could turn into strategic allies in the future. You also encourage him to use your organization's immense training library, which he can visit in his lunch break to learn the skills he needs for a promotion. To inspire and motivate Jim, you assign him projects that will stretch his skills and knowledge base. Instead of being overwhelmed, he expresses excitement about the opportunity. After your talk, Jim takes your advice and starts making the most of his time in the office. He works on his projects with dedication, impressing both you and your boss.

When to use it

- This style should be used whenever you are dealing with a person who needs help building long-term skills, or if you feel that he or she is "adrifting" and could benefit from mentoring relationship. However, this style can fail when it's used with a person who is not making an effort, or who needs a lot of direction and feedback.

Example

After a difficult year, Sarah's headmaster has finally been asked to leave her department. Although she was proficient at her job, her management style was dictatorial. It didn't matter what she had to do or whose feelings she hurt – meeting the school goals was her top priority. Sarah's been asked to take over her position, and, although she's excited about the opportunity, she's now in charge of a team that is emotionally battered and untrusting.

Sarah decides to focus on her team's emotional needs before doing any work on school goals and future projects. Her first few meetings are just spent talking. She allows everyone to open up about how their old boss made them feel. Every person on the team is allowed time to vent. The group quickly realizes that although they went through their own tough times, they all experienced similar things. After two meetings, the atmosphere in the team is better and more open to new relationships. Because their emotional needs were met first, the group is now ready to focus on new projects and goals.

When to use it

- This style works best in times of stress, when teammates need to heal from a trauma, or when the team needs to rebuild trust. This style should not be used exclusively, because a sole reliance on praise and nurturing can foster mediocre performance and a lack of direction.

Example

Simon is a very troubled student and you have noticed that his attendance to school is becoming every day less regular and, little by little, his attention, participation and overall performance are starting to decrease. You feel the situation is in danger of quick escalation, you're anxious to reverse this – you know that if you can't figure out the right way to approach or help Simon, he will most probably leave school. You call a meeting with your fellow teachers and explain the situation. You ask them if they have any ideas about Simon's situation and how to help him. Then, you give them the floor: For the rest of the meeting, all you do is listen. Your colleagues talk through their options, and you reach a consensus on what to do next.

When to use it

- This style is most effective when the leader needs the team to be involved or have ownership of a decision, plan, or goal, or if he or she is uncertain and needs fresh ideas from qualified teammates. It is not the best choice in an emergency situation, when time is of the essence for another reason or when teammates are inexperienced, lack competence, or not well informed about a situation.

Example

Although the Christmas holidays are coming up, your headmaster is pressuring you to finish the planning part of the Erasmus+ project by the end of the year, which is only a few weeks away. Your team of colleagues helping you in the project is motivated, but they're also tired. They're not looking forward to a last minute push right before their break. You decide to move forward anyway. They can handle the pressure, and if they will help you in finishing the project, they will have the opportunity to attend a training course in Italy. So you get them fired up one last time, asking everyone to work extra hours to ensure success. You also work extra hours yourself, and you help anyone who falls behind.

When to use it

- This style works best when the team is already motivated and skilled, and the leader needs quick high quality results. Used extensively, however, this style can overwhelm, exhaust or lead team members to burnout. In the long run, it also refrains innovation.

Coercive

Example

Maria has just learned that her director has resigned. As the vice director, she's naturally next in line for the position. But right now, the school board is in turmoil. School will begin again in 1 week and everyone is trying to decide what to do and establish priorities in the few time that is left. She tries to collaborate with some of her friends in the school board, but everyone has their own idea of what needs to happen. The board is arguing constantly, and Maria realizes that nothing is going to get done unless someone takes charge. She starts issuing orders to those closest to her in the board, almost without thinking. Her tone is firm and authoritative, and there's no room for debate. Quickly, the room quiets down and she outlines what needs to happen within the next few hours. She ends up quieting the fears of everyone in the room, and things get done quickly. Having passed the crisis, she switches to a more democratic leadership style, respecting the experience and expertise of the school board.

When to use it

- This style is most effective in times of crisis, or during an actual emergency like a tornado or a fire. This style can also help control a problematic teammate when everything else has failed. However, it should be avoided in almost every other case because it can alienate people and stifle flexibility and inventiveness.